

INFORMATION

November 3, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER

FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

SUBJECT: Status Report on Military Standstill and
Military Readiness Measures in Laos

Ambassador Sullivan has sent you a status report on efforts to achieve a military standstill in north Laos and on military readiness measures agreed upon by the SRG on August 10. (Tab A) A summary follows.

Military standstill. There has been no progress toward achieving a military standstill in north Laos, and it is unlikely that there will be any progress during the course of the dry season.

-- During the past few months, Souvanna has been wavering in his determination to push for a neutralization of the Plain of Jars. Recently, however, he indicated that he would soon propose a partial cease fire and bombing halt in north Laos.

-- Souvanna probably has few hopes that his proposal will be taken seriously, but will offer it for the record.

-- There has been no improvement in the climate for talks, and Vang Pao's forces remain in forward positions on the Plain. It is likely that the NVA will attempt to dislodge them by military means rather than by moves toward a military standstill during the dry season.

Military readiness. There has been progress in implementing military readiness measures decided upon in conjunction with the negotiating scenario for north Laos. These measures, however, must now be viewed within the framework of the expected NVA dry season offensive, and Sullivan recommends that their cost should be urgently reviewed in light of the funding limitations in the proposed Symington/ Stennis amendment to the Defense Procurement Authorization Act. (Comment: Our Lao FY-72

DOS, OSD Reviews
Completed

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expenditures are currently being reviewed to ensure that they come within the Symington-Stennis \$350 million ceiling. Our present reading is that there are no major problems although things will be very snug. OMB and DOD are keeping this under careful review and we will be alert for any difficulties which might arise.)

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3) A-1's. The A-1 squadron will remain in Thailand through the 1972 dry season as stipulated.

5) Helicopter gunships. The provision of the six helicopter gunships to support Medevac missions in Laos has not yet been implemented. The army has the six helicopters, and 27 Thai pilots have been selected for training. Ambassador Godley has suggested that U.S. army crews be used in the interim, and DOD is currently studying the alternatives. (Comment: We understand Mr. Laird will probably oppose using U.S. pilots on political grounds. The WSAG vetoed this idea when it was proposed earlier. CINCPAC is urgently working out ways to get the up-grade help training for the Thai done. The training will take 4-6 weeks so that pilots and

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helicopters should be available for the dry season need.)

In addition to reporting on the implementation of the five SRG directives above, Ambassador Sullivan notes the following:

U. S. medical facilities 25X1
in Thailand will also be offered as available.

-- Ambassador Godley has requested funds for munitions which would permit an increase in the FLAF sortie level from 3,000 per month to 3,500 per month during the rainy season and to 4,000 per month during the dry season at an estimated additional cost of \$34.4 million. CINCPAC is reviewing this with Embassy Vientiane and will forward recommendations. (Comment: We have asked DOD to look into the status of this proposal. DOD has already told us informally that the proposed increased sortie rate should cost about \$10 million rather than the earlier \$34 million estimate. In any event, the principal concern is to ascertain whether the amount can be accommodated under the \$350 million ceiling or whether it would involve cutting other expenditures.)

Colonel Kennedy concurs.

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